

# Facts About Cervical Cancer

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## What You Should Know

- No one should die from cervical cancer. If detected early, all deaths from cervical cancer can be prevented through appropriate treatment.
- Cervical cancer can be detected early by regular Pap smear tests.
- Most cervical cancers develop over a relatively long period of time. During this time, abnormal tissue can be detected easily by a Pap smear and then removed by a health care provider.
- Experts believe that virtually all cervical cancer deaths could be prevented by a combination of safe sex practices, routine Pap smears, and appropriate follow-up of abnormal screening results.
- Cervical cancer is one of the few cancers that can be prevented by using the same precautions as with other sexually transmitted diseases.
- The Michigan Cancer Consortium, the Michigan Department of Community Health, and the American Cancer Society recommend:
  - ✓ **All women who have reached the age of 21** or who have been sexually active for three years should obtain a Pap smear every year.
  - ✓ **After three consecutive normal exams**, the Pap test may be performed every two years, at the provider's discretion.

## Risk Factors

- The most important risk factor for cervical cancer is infection with human papillomavirus (HPV), a common sexually transmitted disease also known as genital warts. Women who have had unprotected sex, intercourse at a young age, and/or many sexual partners are at an increased risk for HPV infection.<sup>1</sup>
- Additional contributing risk factors include smoking, HIV infection, and current or past chlamydia infection.<sup>1</sup>
- Other possible risk factors include a diet low in fruits and vegetables and a low socioeconomic status.<sup>1</sup>

## Incidence and Mortality

- During 2001, 428 women in Michigan were diagnosed with invasive cervical cancer. In 2002, 114 women in Michigan died of the disease.<sup>2,3</sup>
- During 2001, approximately 23 percent of women diagnosed with invasive cervical cancer were between the ages of 25 and 39; 27 percent were between 40 and 49; 27 percent were between 50 and 64 years old; and 22 percent were 65 years of age or older.<sup>2</sup>
- Since 1990, there has been a decline in the incidence of invasive cervical cancer among both Michigan women and women across the United States.
  - ✓ Michigan rates decreased from 14.0 invasive cervical cancer cases per 100,000 women in 1990 to 8.2 cases in 2001.<sup>2</sup>
  - ✓ National rates decreased from 10.8 invasive cervical cancer cases per 100,000 women in 1986 to 7.9 cases in 2001.<sup>4</sup>

- Since the late 1980s, there has been a decline in the mortality rates associated with cervical cancer in both Michigan and the United States; mortality rates in Michigan have consistently remained lower than the national average.
  - ✓ Michigan rates decreased from a high of 3.8 cervical cancer-related deaths per 100,000 women in 1989 to 2.1 deaths per 100,000 women in 2002.<sup>3</sup>
  - ✓ National rates decreased from 3.8 cervical cancer-related deaths per 100,000 women in 1986 to a low of 2.7 deaths per 100,000 women in 2001.<sup>4</sup>
- During 2001, Michigan ranked 29<sup>th</sup> in the nation in deaths from cervical cancer.<sup>5</sup>

## Stage at Diagnosis

- While the incidence and mortality rates related to invasive cervical cancer have decreased over the last decade, the incidence of pre-cancerous lesions of the cervix (also known as cervical cancer *in situ*) has increased in Michigan.
  - ✓ During 1985, 1,582 women in Michigan received a diagnosis of cervical cancer *in situ*. Sixteen years later, during 2001, 2,822 women in the state received that diagnosis.<sup>2</sup>
  - ✓ This increase in diagnosis may be due, in part, to improved cervical cancer screening behaviors.<sup>2</sup>
- Of all cervical cancer cases (including both invasive cervical cancer and cervical cancer *in situ*) diagnosed in Michigan during 2001, 87 percent were diagnosed at the *in situ* stage.<sup>2</sup>

## Screening Behaviors

- More than 96 percent of Michigan women age 18 and older have received at least one Pap smear during their lifetime.<sup>6</sup>

- Eighty-five percent of Michigan women age 18 and older have received a Pap smear within the past three years. Women less likely to receive cervical cancer screening within the past three years include those with low incomes, those with less than a high school education, and/or those who are over the age of 60.<sup>6</sup>
- The American Cancer Society reports that between 60 percent and 80 percent of American women with newly diagnosed cervical cancer have not had a Pap smear within the past five years. In fact, many may never have had one.<sup>1</sup>

## References:

1. American Cancer Society
2. MDCH Cancer Registry, 1985-2001
3. MDCH Division for Vital Records & Health Statistics, 1985-2002
4. SEER Cancer Statistics Review, 1975-2001
5. NCI State Cancer Profiles
6. Michigan Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2002

## Screening Help for Women in Underserved Populations

Michigan's Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program (BCCCP) provides free annual breast and cervical cancer screening and diagnostic services to underserved populations across the state.

To be eligible for the program, a woman must be at least 40 years old and have a household income that is at or below 250 percent of the federal poverty level. For example, a family of two can earn up to \$31,225 per year.

Women who are diagnosed with cancer through the BCCCP may be eligible to receive Medicaid for cancer treatment.

**Call 1-800-922-MAMM for more information about eligibility requirements or participating BCCCP providers.**